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* The "Plea for the Middle Classes" was the document which led to the foundation of the large groups of "Woodard Schools" which now (1884) include 3 in Sussex (Dawling, Hurst-Pierpoint & Ardingly) 1 in Staffs. (Denstone) 1 in Shropsh. (Ellesmere, dependent on Denstone) 1 in Somersetshire. (Taunton) & 1 I think in Gloucestershire. J.G.T.

> + a Plea for the Middle Classes Rev. W. Woodard

SINGLENESS OF PURPOSE
THE SECRET OF SUCCESS.

A SERMON,

PREACHED AT THE
CHURCH OF S. MARY THE VIRGIN IN OXFORD.
SEPT. 19TH, 1852.

UPON OCCASION OF THE DEATH OF
THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON.

BY THE
REV. C. MARRIOTT, B.D.,
FELLOW OF ORIEL,
AND VICAR OF S. MARY THE VIRGIN IN OXFORD.

“Δυνατὸν καὶ μὴ ἄρχοντας γῆς καὶ θαλάττης πράττειν
τὰ καλά.”

Arist. Eth. x. 8.

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A SERMON, &c.

S. MATT. vi. 24.

“No man can serve two masters.”

WE usually go on from day to day, and some of us from year to year, without very much thought of considering our whole plans of life afresh. We have a certain way, into which we have fallen partly through education, partly through circumstances, partly through the choice of our own will, or the bent of our own inclination, and we keep to that way, without much or perhaps any thought of forsaking it. Yet startling events in our own history arouse us and make us again reflect, and even such events as do not immediately concern us, will often set us thinking, and lead us to take more extended views of human life.

An event has taken place in the last week which has made a strong impression on the national mind of England, and which will be felt, as it becomes known, throughout the civilized world. It is an event that we have long expected, and half won-

dered that it came no sooner. An old man has gone the way of all the earth, somewhat suddenly, yet not more so than was very probable at his advanced age. There is nothing strange in it; nothing but what must one day have been. But when one dies who has been honoured and feared by whole nations for half a century, in war a conqueror of conquerors, in peace a stay to his country and a father to princes, thoughts are stirred within us which come round upon our own life.

It is not that we can think of being such as he, for few can be his equals in the powers of the mind or of the body. And of those few, fewer still can have the same opportunities of putting forth their energies in great deeds. But the thought of one who has achieved such greatness leads men to reflect on the path that may be before themselves, and, without any vanity or culpable ambition, they may ask the question, "What may I learn from his example, toward attaining whatever God has been pleased to place within my reach?" And the answer is one of more general and profitable application than some of us may at first be aware. For a careless mind might turn it off with some such remark as this—"It is certainly a great thing for a man to conquer armies, and guide the councils of nations, but I am not either a soldier or a senator, and therefore the example of such a one is not to my purpose."

But an example may be of value far beyond its own immediate range. And as the ancients have shewn in their fables that what seems a silly story may convey a striking moral, and that the actions

of a brute may teach mankind by a true analogy of principle, so our Blessed Lord has shewn in His parables that the actions of bad or worldly men may afford lessons to His saints, and that the dealings of this world may instruct us in the wisdom of the kingdom of Heaven, inasmuch as “the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.”

In using such an expression let me not be understood to reflect on the departed. I mean no more than this, that though in his latter days especially he shewed a marked attention to many of the outward duties of religion, and though, from his known sincerity of character, we cannot well suppose that observance to have been other than the real expression of his inward thoughts, yet he is known to us not as a saint, but as a great man of the world. And I think it is more profitable to use his example in this respect, than to speculate upon the probability of his having repented as a Christian ought of this or that fault, a question which we might after all solve otherwise than it will be solved by the Judge of quick and dead. And even the reflections we might indulge on the vanity of earthly greatness, the shortness of the longest life, and the strange blank that comes over our mortal existence when it draws to a close, are less likely to have a permanent effect on our character, than a wise and clear observation of the points of strength by which one of the greatest of men prevailed over every adversary.

Our calling in this world, whether it be sacred or worldly, is a great part of our duty. Whatso-

ever our hand findeth to do, we do well to do it with our might, and diligence in business is one way of serving the Lord. In this sense at least, we have an example almost unequalled in him whose mortal remains must now shortly be committed to the grave. Never was there a man who shewed a more remarkable determination to do *well* whatever he did. Never was there a man who served his king and his country with more disinterested zeal, sacrificing what seemed to be opportunities of distinguishing himself, or of gaining promotion, or of appropriating to himself credit that he really deserved, sooner than allow the very slightest hindrance to the public service. It was a maxim of his life that private interest was to give way to duty and to the public good, and, richly as he was rewarded by a country able and desirous to reward unequalled services, he never grasped at rewards. He gave himself, in dutiful faith, to his country, and his country honours him the more because he preferred duty to honours, and strove rather to *be* faithful and useful to her, than to be thought so by men.

He was no mere favourite of fortune, as men sometimes profanely designate one to whom God has been pleased to grant great advantages and signal successes beyond his merit. Every step of his public life was marked by the same unwearied attention to the whole range of duties that lay upon him, and the same careful foresight in providing for future needs and future dangers. While he executed one work he prepared for another, and was always more ready and better furnished

for action than either friends or enemies imagined. His constant watchfulness and industry made the very most of whatever resources he had at command, and enabled him, amidst the difficulties of long campaigns, to abstain from acts of oppression which the necessities of war often force upon less provident and less humane generals. And this is a part of his character from which every one of us may draw an important lesson. Genius and courage may sometimes accomplish great results without diligence, by sudden efforts, but they cannot make a career like his, or a man like him. But no extraordinary genius is needed to enable a man to strive from day to day to do the work before him *well*. And it is by so doing that he will attain the goal that Providence has set before him. We cannot be all conquerors, all senators, all men of wealth and fame. But there is nothing to hinder but that every man upon earth, from the greatest to the least, might be successful in life, and trusted, and respected, and valued by his fellows. There is no necessity that demands a class of weak, unsteady, good-for-nothing men, unhappy themselves, and a nuisance to society, no reason why all should not be strong-minded, firm in purpose, active in their calling, and rewarded with some fair and gratifying success. The chief reason why the world does not seem wide enough for us all, and one man's success injures another, is that we cannot entirely trust each other's character. Were all the men who cannot make their way in life in England men of known honesty and industry, we could easily find them employment and a comfort-

able livelihood elsewhere. And I think it stands to reason that if men knew how to manage the distribution of the good things which earth produces, and which human labour brings to perfection, all might be useful, and all well supplied. And it is not the rich who stand in the way of this, but on the one hand the selfish, and on the other hand the idle, the vicious, and the improvident.

Setting aside such accidents as may well be provided for by a moderate exercise of benevolence, we may fairly say, that the men who have plenty of useful work to do are able to maintain themselves in some degree of comfort. If the rich live by the labours of others, it must be by *theirs*, for they do not live by the labours of those who do nothing, though ever so poor. And it seems clear that if those who do little or nothing were working every day to supply *each other's* wants, (could this in any way be brought about,) the world would know much less of distress and destitution than it does. I will venture to say that the means for such an arrangement amongst many thousands of our poor would be furnished by the money that is given in this country within a week to idle beggars and plausible deceivers, and wasted by them in useless and worse than useless riot.

I say this in order to shew that it is not the nature of things, but the fault of men's will, that every man has not, or seems not to have, some chance of success in the world. Not of greatness, it may be, but still of such success as might well be an object of ambition to him according to his

circumstances, and would make his life, in a worldly sense, happy. I believe, in fact, that very few are without such opportunities, except through some fault on their own part. If they have neglected to use their earlier years by diligent application to what they were set to learn, and still more if they have not been careful to preserve the most precious capital for every one commencing life, a character for steadiness and unfailing honesty, they must not complain of being unfortunate, but strive as soon as may be to repent and amend their faults. And even so, a character once lost is not soon regained, and youthful years wasted come not over again. One who has cast away his birthright for pottage, must expect but the blessing of Esau.

If then the memory of our departed hero and statesman stirs in any of your minds a thought of reasonable and practical ambition, let it not turn to fancies about changing your destination in life, and seeking some grander field of enterprize, but rather to deep conviction of the necessity of a steadfast and dutiful purpose, and to a determination of will, fixing such a purpose as your own principle of conduct. I do not say that this will make you great, but it will make you as great and as successful as God in His good Providence sees fit that you should be, and gives you the opportunity of being.

Is this mere worldly counsel? No! not even as it relates to the things of this world ought it to be so called. For in them you have a sacred duty to God, to your neighbour, and to yourselves.

In them, if in them is your calling, you are bound in duty to God to exert yourselves, so as to provide an honest maintenance both for yourselves and for all dependent on you, and to make yourselves useful, as you may be able, to your country and to your neighbours. And by diligence, and activity, and faithfulness, in this earthly stewardship you may obtain means and influence which you may use to good purpose in the services of the kingdom of God.

But this is not the only *religious* use you may make of a great worldly example. For as generals and statesmen do not grow up without thought, but are formed first by proper military education, and then by their own careful practice, study, and observation, so is it with those who make high attainments in the kingdom of God. And the application of thought and will, which in the world make conquerors, and founders of institutions, and great ministers of state,—the same, I say, applied to the service of God in His Church, make martyrs, confessors, and saints.

I do not speak now only of Apostolic labours, of missions to the heathen, of evangelizing crowded cities, of planting the institutions of the Church in newly-peopled districts, though there I could point across the seas to more than one in the armies of God who have nobly followed the example of the most laborious, the most provident, the most unassuming, and the most disinterested of all commanders. In the shop or in the field, in the market or the manufactory, as master or as workman, every one, man, woman, and child, has

a great work to carry on for God, labours to go through, battles to fight, enemies to conquer, duties to do for the present, provisions to make for the future.

It may not be well for any one to think he is to be a saint, in the sense in which we use the term of those who rise far above the common level of dutiful and earnest Christians. Perhaps it is better that every one should have such a consciousness of his own deficiencies and infirmities as rather to take to himself a lower position. But every one ought, even in duty, to strive for the utmost that he sees himself able to attain, and at every turn to labour for perfection in all that is within his power. When He that hath called him shall come, He will not place him the lower for having thought little of his own attainments; but if that low estimate of himself has led him to do like the idle servant with the one talent, then he will lose even that he had.

The rule is, to do what you can, and leave the result to God. Give yourselves wholly to His service. Let nothing divide your energy, but spend your utmost endeavours with unflinching resolution on the work that lies before you, and you will attain at least the best success that is in your power, and probably far more than you dream of attaining. A divided heart, a wavering will, a doubtful service, do not well with any master, but least of all with Him Who has the highest claim to all you have, all you are, and all you can do, and Who sees the very thought in your mind before it goes forth into an action.

Children of Light! Be wise as they that are wise in this world, and fear not but that your Lord will commend you. With Him your reward is sure, be faithful over a few things, be they never so few. Conquer the pride, the lust, the greediness, the anger, the jealousy, the idleness, the vanity of this day, of to-morrow, and of the next day, and you shall find that you have won victories over the Prince of the Power of the Air. Rule well your own spirit, your own body, and your own tongue, and you shall be of those that judge angels, and hold high ministries in the kingdom of Heaven.







